

Specific Methods

There are several alternative methods, which the physician may use when conservative methods do not control symptoms. These include: ligation, surgery, endoscopic therapy, and laser treatment.

Ligation

A common method of treating internal hemorrhoids is to tie off the base of the vein with a small rubber band. As the blood circulation stops, the hemorrhoid degenerates and falls off. Repeat treatments are sometimes necessary.

Infrared Photocoagulation/Laser Therapy

An infrared light source or other form of laser is used to coagulate the base of the internal hemorrhoidal veins, effectively stopping the blood flow within the vein and allowing the hemorrhoid to shrink and disappear. Multiple treatments are usually needed.

Surgery

Surgery is sometimes recommended in treating hemorrhoids. However, because of the painful and prolonged recovery required, surgery is strictly reserved for cases of:

- Acute, painful clot (thrombosis) of hemorrhoids
- Profusely or continuously bleeding hemorrhoids
- Longstanding, irreversible, and large hemorrhoids
- When other treatments are unsuccessful

Endoscopic Therapy

During endoscopic treatment, the physician locates the base of the hemorrhoidal vein and applies heat or an injection, to stop the blood flow and allow the hemorrhoid to disappear. The endoscopist evaluates each patient's case to determine the best treatment.

To Prevent Hemorrhoids...

- Eat plenty of fiber, bran, or roughage, or use a bulking agent to maintain regular, soft bowel movements.
- Do not delay or try to prevent a bowel movement when the urge is present.
- Exercise, especially aerobic, may help produce more regular bowel movements.

- Drink plenty of liquids and eat regularly scheduled meals.
- Keep the area around the anus clean and dry.

Summary

Hemorrhoids are an especially common disorder and often heal spontaneously with minimal treatment. Treatment typically is simple and effective, although surgery occasionally is necessary. Hemorrhoids can mask a more serious disorder and, therefore, must be evaluated and diagnosed properly by a physician. People with hemorrhoids who work closely with their physician are usually assured a good outcome and relief from this common disorder.

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HEMORRHOIDS



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Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids, or in layman's terms, piles, are one of mankind's most common and annoying diseases. Although rarely serious, hemorrhoids are troublesome. Occasionally the symptoms of hemorrhoids may actually hide a more serious underlying problem such as cancer or colitis. It is important to report any problem to your physician so that a proper evaluation may be performed and the appropriate treatment developed. All too often, the individual will self-diagnose hemorrhoids mistakenly, and instead have an early treatable cancer, delaying life-saving and curative treatment.

What are Hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids are dilated or enlarged veins, which occur in and around the anus and rectum. They may be external (outside the anus), internal (in the lower rectum), or complex internal hemorrhoids, which penetrate through the anal ring to the outside. In the case of external or complex hemorrhoids, the hemorrhoids can be felt and seen as lumps or knots. Hemorrhoids also may remain inside the rectum and may not be felt or seen. These are called internal hemorrhoids.

What Causes Hemorrhoids?

Hemorrhoids develop when blood is forced to remain in the vein for too long a period of time, under

pressure. This causes expansion of the walls of the blood vessel. In the wall of the veins are simple tissue valves, which help to prevent backflow and move the blood toward the heart. When the walls of the veins distend, these valves no longer close well, and the blood remains in the vein and the pressure increases, expanding the vein walls further. Eventually the valves no longer function, and the hemorrhoids remain permanently dilated. Many conditions cause this problem to occur, including childbirth, excessive straining due to constipation, work or exercise, or simply remaining constantly in the standing position. In any case, some people will have no predisposing conditions and still develop hemorrhoids.

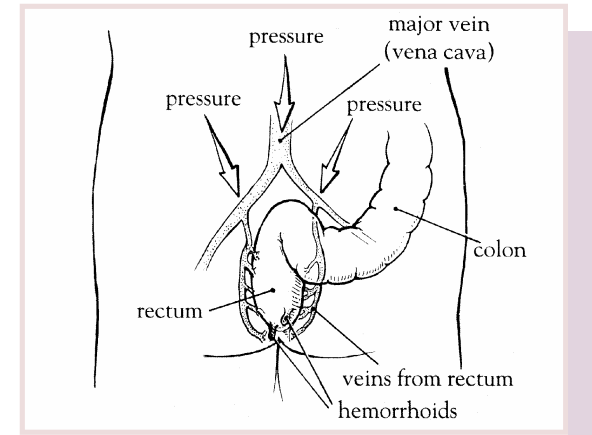
Symptoms of Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids can produce several different symptoms, which are not serious:

- **Itching and Irritation** - This is the most common symptom, especially if the area is moist and irritated. There may occasionally be thick clear mucus secreted.
- **Bleeding** - Usually this is seen as small amounts of bright red blood are seen in the toilet water or on the toilet tissue. It occurs especially after a difficult bowel movement or diarrhea. The blood might also be seen as soiling of the underwear. Internal hemorrhoids that bleed may produce fresh blood in the stool. When blood is seen mixed in with the stool, it may be a sign of a more serious condition or hemorrhoids. Occasionally, the bleeding may be extensive and immediate medical treatment may be required. Even a very small amount of blood may turn the toilet water a dark red.
- **Thrombosis and Pain** - A blood clot in the hemorrhoid may cause severe pain and swelling. This usually demands immediate medical attention and occasionally surgery.

Hemorrhoids and Cancer

Hemorrhoids do not develop into cancer. However, both hemorrhoids and cancer can cause rectal bleeding. In fact, many disorders can be the cause of rectal bleeding. When rectal bleeding occurs, and especially in those over age 50, it should be considered a serious problem until an exact diagnosis is made. The physician who directly examines the rectal area can make the specific diagnosis.



Treatment

Treatment of hemorrhoids varies depending on the severity, the type of hemorrhoid, and specific symptoms. Most often, the normal healing process is all that is required to fix the problem. Treatment is divided into general or conservative vs. specific methods.

Conservative Treatment

1. Keep the anal area clean, with mild soap and gentle drying. Baby wipes, without alcohol, are useful. Avoid rubbing or itching.
2. Keep the anus and hemorrhoids as dry as possible. Powders or absorbent pads may help, if no irritation is caused by their use.
3. Eat a diet high in fiber and roughage to help retain water in the stool. Soft, bulky stools are easier to pass and reduce straining.
4. Avoid straining when having a bowel movement.
5. If there is pain or tenderness, a 10-20 minute hot Sitz bath, 2-4 times daily aids cleaning, provides relief from the pain, and promotes healing.
6. Medicated suppositories, containing a steroid, are often used to shrink and decrease inflammation of hemorrhoids. These require a prescription, and should be used only for short periods of time.
7. Over-the-counter medicated creams, with or without cortisone, may help control swelling and itching, but only for external hemorrhoids.

